

**STATEMENT OF CHARLES E. ALLEN,
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BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE, INFORMATION
SHARING, AND TERRORISM RISK ASSESSMENT
COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

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Introduction

Chairwoman Harman, Ranking Member Reichert, Members of the Subcommittee: Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you about the Interagency Threat Assessment and Coordination Group (ITACG), which was stood up in October 2007 and has been operational under the management of the National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC) since January 2008.

I want to speak to you on the progress that we have made in implementing the vision set forth in the President's National Strategy for Information Sharing and the 9/11 Act of 2007. The information sharing framework described therein placed an advocate for State, local, and tribal interests at the hub of the counterterrorism community to ensure federally-coordinated information and intelligence is robustly made available to our domestic law enforcement and homeland security partners.

I am also pleased to appear alongside my partners here from NCTC, FBI, and the PM-ISE. I know they share my commitment to the ITACG's success. Every day we work together to ensure actionable and intelligible, terrorism-related information is provided to State, local, and tribal authorities. The ITACG, moreover, is playing an increasingly important role in shaping those products and making them more useful at the State, local, and tribal levels.

DHS' Commitment to the ITACG

I know this Subcommittee has concerns about the level of DHS support to building a robust presence of State, local, and tribal representatives in the Group. *As I have stated previously, I remain fully committed to making the ITACG a vital element in information sharing to our State, local, and tribal partners. Secretary Chertoff shares this commitment, and there are no barriers, stovepipes, or other impediments to hinder DHS efforts to ensure the ITACG's success.* DHS sees the ITACG as a vital complement to our department's protective mission and information sharing initiatives across a range of Departmental efforts.

Moreover, our actions demonstrate this commitment. We are working with our federal partners to build an effective ITACG as rapidly and as broadly as possible. We have experienced bureaucratic delays along the way, but we moved swiftly to overcome these delays as they were identified. In one case, I personally intervened with the Acting Deputy Secretary to ensure that State and local officials could be fully funded by the Department while posted to the ITACG.

Further, I am holding regular sessions with the ITACG Advisory Council – monthly for now rather than quarterly as required by its charter. The Advisory Council, half of whose membership is comprised of State, local, and tribal members and half federal members is central to the ITACG's success. I will speak more specifically to the

Council's actions later in this testimony, but let me address two efforts currently underway. We are working to:

- Harmonize DHS and FBI sponsorship programs so that State and local organizations do not have to pay a financial price for sending their officials to serve in the ITACG, and
- Expand the ITACG's State, local, and tribal representation to include a broader set of homeland security disciplines than are presently represented, to include tribal, fire & safety, health, law enforcement intelligence analysis, and State-level homeland security management.

It remains challenging to find sufficient numbers of officials willing to go through the required security clearance processing and then uproot their families for a year or more to move to Washington. We rely heavily on the State, local, and tribal professional associations represented on the Advisory Council to identify highly qualified candidates for the ITACG.

Standing up the ITACG Element at NCTC

I sent, in close partnership with the FBI, several senior intelligence officials over to NCTC to co-lead (with the FBI) an Implementation Team to lay the foundations for the ITACG – well before policies to govern the ITACG were agreed upon. My staff explored potential ITACG configurations, roles, and responsibilities with their NCTC hosts as the ITACG concept was submitted to interagency, Administration and Congressional reviews. *The Implementation Team's hard work resulted in the ITACG reaching initial operating capability in the first of this year when four State and local law enforcement representatives arrived to begin their tour of duty within NCTC.*

Today the ITACG consists of 10 staff officers: the DHS Director, an FBI Deputy, four State and local law enforcement officials, two counterterrorism analysts from DHS and the FBI, and two support contractors with significant experience in State and local law enforcement and counterterrorism intelligence. I have provided two of my most capable intelligence officers to the ITACG, one a former deputy division manager, and the other a highly qualified senior intelligence analyst. Together, they bring valuable experience in the analysis and coordination of terrorism-related products intended for release to State, local, and tribal customers. They are working seamlessly under NCTC management with their FBI and State and local partners.

ITACG Impact

In my budget presentation last month, I noted the ITACG's evolving practice of scanning incoming current reporting, terrorism-related events, and finished assessments for items of potential value to domestic homeland security officials. *I am pleased to report that these efforts are bearing real fruit – not only by identifying items with homeland interest – but also by helping DHS, FBI, and NCTC tailor our respective and joint*

products to meet State, local and tribal officials' needs, fulfilling its mandate in the National Strategy for Information Sharing, pp 18 - 19.

From October 2007 through February 2008 the ITACG did an initial familiarization review of more than 34,000 intelligence reports and products at all classification levels – most with no bearing on the Homeland. The ITACG worked to get a number of highly classified products relating to the Homeland downgraded for release to domestic customers at the SECRET and UNCLASSIFIED levels, developing a production “packaging” process at NCTC for routine downgrading and publication of such products to the NCTC ONLINE-SECRET (NOL-S) web repository, and whenever possible, to the UNCLASSIFIED level to facilitate the widest possible distribution. Please note that the bulk of those 34,000 reports and products are routinely available to State and local officials over HSDN and NOL-S. The ITACG assisted with identifying those with Homeland impacts that could be further downgraded for wider release. ***I cannot over emphasize the importance of this process – moving information as far down the classification chain as possible is of paramount utility to our State, local, and tribal customers.***

Over that same period, the ITACG also familiarized itself with nearly 2,000 worldwide threat reports concerning US interests, identifying 77 of these as possible threats to the Homeland. Conducting further reviews of these potential threats, it worked with NCTC, DHS, and FBI to tailor threat characterizations in terms State local or tribal officials could easily interpret, as opposed to the sometimes arcane language used by the federal Intelligence Community. ***These reviews provided marked improvements to joint DHS/FBI advisories and assessments on behalf of State, local, and tribal users.***

Finally, the ITACG has drafted a “tagline” to indicate to State, local, and tribal audiences those federal terrorism products that have received ITACG review and coordination with respect to their concerns. The ITACG Advisory Council is currently reviewing the proposed language for inclusion on affected federal products.

Integrating the ITACG into Community Production Processes

Today the ITACG reviews all Homeland threat reporting and terrorism-related assessments produced by NCTC, DHS, and FBI. We are actively working together on how best to interact with the ITACG to factor in its perspectives for joint DHS/FBI or single-agency (but still coordinated) time-sensitive threat notifications and assessments, as well as a range of other terrorism-related products we routinely provide to State, local, tribal, and critical infrastructure security officials.

We are guided in this effort by the seven requirements for ITACG operations set forth in the National Strategy for Information Sharing:

1. enabling a ‘federally coordinated’ perspective,
2. providing advice, counsel, and subject matter expertise,
3. enabling production of clear, relevant ‘federally coordinated’ information in a timely manner,

4. facilitating ‘situation awareness’ reporting on events with potential terrorism aspects,
5. ensuring all such information is rendered in a usable format,
6. informing and shaping Intelligence Community products, and
7. facilitating the production and posting by NCTC of ‘federally coordinated’ terrorism-related information.

The ITACG Advisory Council is Key to ITACG Success

On behalf of the Secretary, I am pleased to chair the ITACG Advisory Council, which has nine federal members of the counterterrorism community, and 10 State, local, and tribal members representing a wide array of security or law enforcement professional associations. I have assembled the Council at NCTC twice in the last three months, and hosted a teleconference this past week to discuss widening its efforts to recruit additional State, local, and tribal disciplines into the ITACG. In addition, I have already scheduled three more Council meetings at NCTC for this fiscal year. We will meet as often as necessary during this first year of the ITACG’s startup.

I have set an ambitious agenda for the Council, centering on our discussion of a number of priority challenges that the ITACG faces – from recruitment and support of State, local, and tribal personnel – to establishing a formal mechanism and feedback process for State, local, and tribal customers, who are key to strengthening the ITACG’s value and evaluating its success.

Dissemination

While DHS and FBI continue to have extensive department-specific dissemination practices for sharing law-enforcement or regulatory information with their respective constituencies, DHS, FBI and NCTC, in consultation with our partners in the ISE, *are rapidly converging to unify information sharing for general purpose terrorism-related products at both the classified and unclassified levels. We are also equipping our domestic partners at record levels to join in this new way of doing business.*

Classified Products

While working through the ITACG implementation, it became imperative that we provide a *central online repository for classified products that State, local, and tribal officials – once properly accredited – could access in a timely and reliable fashion.* Rather than create a competing online repository on the DHS network, I have partnered with NCTC, in coordination with the FBI, to endorse the use of NCTC Online-SECRET (NOL-S) as the principal venue for hosting classified intelligence materials intended to reach our State, local, and tribal partners. Today all SECRET level terrorism-related products written by NCTC, DHS, or FBI and issued as single-agency, joint, or fully-vetted community products are posted to the NOL-S repository. *Please note that regardless of whether a product is issued singly, jointly, or by the full community – all*

products destined for State, local and tribal audiences are increasingly coordinated among all principal agencies – with ITACG assistance.

Furthermore, *NOL-S is increasingly accessible by State, local, and tribal homeland security professionals over the DHS-provided Homeland Secure Data Network (HSDN) and the FBI's FBINET. DHS is on track to deploy HSDN to 41 State and local fusion centers (SLFCs) by the end of fiscal year 2008.* HSDN provides SLFCs with a critical capability not only to access federally supplied threat information, but also as a means to communicate with each other in a classified setting – *thus contributing to the vision of establishing a national network of fusion centers called for in the President's National Strategy for Information Sharing.*

Unclassified Products

The ITACG also continues to drive community producers to prepare appropriate terrorism-related materials at the UNCLASSIFIED level whenever possible. That way they can be posted not only to NOL-S, but also to the DHS-hosted Homeland Security State and Local Intelligence Community of Interest (HS SLIC) web repository – an unclassified intelligence component of the Homeland Security Information Network (HSIN) – as well as transmitted over other channels to State, local, and tribal officials. As you are also aware, terrorism-related materials at the UNCLASSIFIED level are also accessible on the FBI's Law Enforcement Online (LEO) information sharing data repository.

This year, the HS SLIC has experienced remarkable growth with large numbers of State and local fusion centers joining in the community. As of February 2008, 41 States have signed up and are actively using this community to share law enforcement intelligence, terrorism, emergency response, and other security information between and among themselves, DHS and other federal partners – including the Department of Interior, Drug Enforcement Administration, FBI, U.S. Northern Command, and the ITACG.

All DHS and FBI unclassified intelligence reports are posted to the HS SLIC community of interest repository – *providing a unified location where registered security officials can reliably access UNCLASSIFIED federal products relating to terrorism threats to the Homeland.*

Conclusion

In closing, I want to convey to you my personal sense of urgency and commitment to the mission we all share, that of ensuring that the federal government vigorously provides actionable intelligence to State, local, and tribal officials who must address threats to the Homeland at the local level. I share your commitment to the ITACG – and place a high priority on rallying support for this new element – for which I have opened every door at DHS. I have also made a significant investment in the operations and success of the Advisory Council – where I meet regularly with State, local, and tribal officials to further

more seamless information sharing practices. I take that relationship and their trust very seriously.

None of us – whether in Federal, State, local or tribal service – can unilaterally predict the threat, warn our stakeholders, and take action to mitigate the risks. Our success depends on our ability to work together, while never losing sight of the privacy and civil liberties of the public that we are sworn to protect. Besieged by constant threat from foreign and domestic actors, we require vigilance and shared awareness to secure our nation. Our success will depend on how relentlessly we collaborate, a calling to which I remain singularly dedicated.

Thank you and I look forward to your questions.